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12 February 1981

## MEMORANDUM

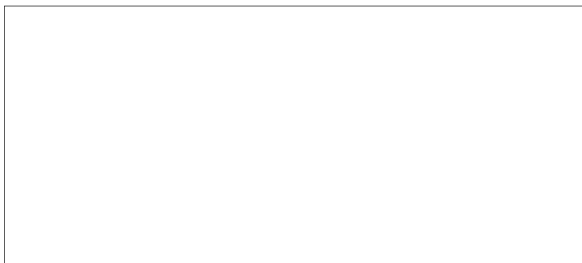
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The present position of the Intelligence Community with regard to Soviet intervention in Poland is that the Polish regime is moving closer to the use of force, that they are not likely to take this step in the absence of new strike activity, and that the Soviets will go along with the Polish regime for a little while longer. In this view, the Soviets see the appointment of Jaruzelski as a positive step by the regime. The attached report prepared by the Strategic Warning Staff contains a more ominous interpretation of the events of the last few days. In view of the importance of the Polish issue, and the possibility that the West might be faced with a crisis in a few days, I believe this alternative interpretation should be seriously considered.



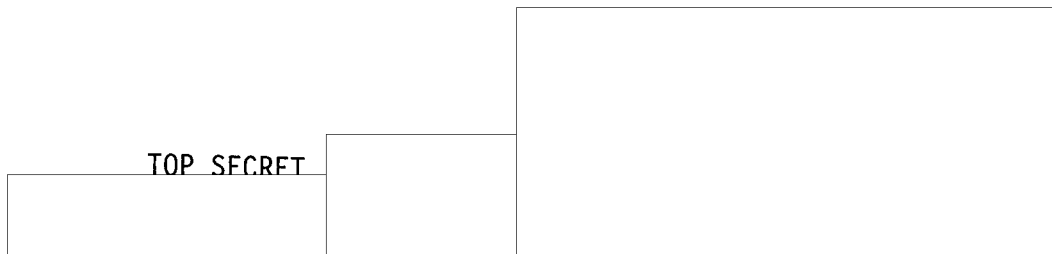
Richard Lehman  
National Intelligence Officer  
for Warning

## Attachment



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**Strategic  
Warning  
Staff**

# SPECIAL REPORT

## Poland-USSR: Crackdown, Chaos, and Intervention

12 FEBRUARY 1981

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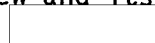
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## FORWARD

It is the function of the Strategic Warning Staff to provide a thorough airing of serious alternative explanations of key intelligence issues with strategic warning implications. This report presents an alternative view of Soviet reckoning over the need for forceful actions by the Polish government against dissidents and the union leadership. Though the evidence has widely been construed to indicate that the Soviets have preferred to set no rigid deadlines for Kania and his government, an alternative view holds that the Soviets have indeed decided to compel Kania to take forceful action before the CPSU Congress at the end of February. This latter view and its consequences are examined in this Special Report. 

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*This special report is the product of the Strategic Warning Staff and has not been coordinated with the rest of the intelligence community. Questions or comments on this report should be addressed to the Director, Strategic Warning Staff, Ext. 695-0031, Pentagon.*

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**POLAND-USSR: Crackdown, Chaos, and Intervention**

*Polish military activities, governmental changes, and public statements increasingly suggest that a crackdown against the dissidents and perhaps the union leadership may be imminent. The Polish military will almost certainly be involved as a backup to the government's repressive actions. This initiative is probably as much a response to Soviet pressure as it is a reflection of the deteriorating situation in Poland. The Soviets evidently are more sanguine about the possibility that chaos might result from such Polish actions than we are. Whatever Moscow's expectations, we believe that should the Poles lose control, the Soviets would not hesitate to send military forces into Poland as soon as possible, with major contingents crossing the frontier within several days of a breakdown in public order. If the Polish government attempts a crackdown within the next few days, there is a better than even chance that unacceptable disorder will occur and Soviet forces will enter Poland within a week.*

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1. Evidence is accumulating that Moscow has lost all confidence in the ability of the Polish government to restore economic and political order under present conditions. The Soviets and their supporters in Warsaw may now view the use of force to break the unions and crush the dissidents as the only available option short of Warsaw Pact military intervention.

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2. The recent elevation of Polish Defense Minister Jaruzelski to the premiership constitutes a clear signal that a government bid to seize control of the situation might even take the form of an emergency regime under military auspices. In an address on 12 February Jaruzelski appealed for a moratorium on strike activity and warned that a "fratricidal conflict" might be in store for Poland if such activity continued. The sudden new importance of the military in the equation was also emphasized when Jaruzelski retained his defense portfolio and even appeared in uniform before the Polish parliament.

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4. The Soviets seem aware that the situation has grave potential.

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5. The Soviet military establishment is almost certainly in a better than normal state of preparedness for an intervention now because of the mobilizations, deployments and exercises of the last few months. Moreover, the Soviets are currently involved in activities that even if not intended as preparations for an intervention would serve to facilitate such an operation.

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6. Soviet Airborne Troops and Military Transport Aviation activity may represent preparations for an intervention contingency against Poland.

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8. Other evidence indicating a continuing concern by the Soviets over the possibility of a military move into Poland includes mobilization activity, [redacted] associated with at least one division in both the Baltic and Carpathian Military Districts.

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9. An important factor inhibiting the USSR from commencing full-scale preparations for military intervention in Poland in the next couple of weeks is the convening of the Twenty-Sixth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in Moscow on 23 February. There is little question that the Soviet leadership would strongly prefer that the Congress, which may last as long as two weeks, take place in an international environment as stable as possible. On the other hand, the Soviets may have decided that the risk that a crackdown in Poland would lead to military intervention is still preferable to continued deterioration of the situation. [redacted]

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10. The Soviets may already be assuming that an internal Polish crackdown could turn into a debacle for the regime, or that the nation-wide general strike that might be triggered would directly threaten Soviet access to key transportation routes and communications facilities. Accordingly, some preparations for large-scale Soviet military intervention might be underway with maximum attention to the requirements of masking such a move from hostile intelligence.

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11. Alternatively, Moscow may be underestimating the strength and intensity of the unions and other opposition elements in Poland, at the same time overestimating Soviet power and influence. If the situation in Poland slides into mass disorder and civil conflict more quickly than Soviet leaders considered possible, the USSR may ultimately find itself launching a hasty, perhaps under-strength, military intervention attempting to subdue all of Poland--possibly even needing to overcome substantial elements of the Polish armed forces. Should such a situation eventuate, we expect the Soviets would mobilize forces with the greatest speed and move the first of them across the Polish frontier in two or three days.

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